JUNE 23, 1993

To community groups:



On Friday June 11, Anti-Racist Action marched through the South Riverdale community to expose, oppose and confront violent white supremacist organizing activity in that area. The demonstration targeted 97 Bertmount Avenue, a residence where Gary Schipper wrote and recorded the vile messages of the Heritage Front Hateline. The Hateline not only gives a forum for openly racist, anti-semitic and homophobic messages, it is also used as a promotion and recruitment tool for the Heritage Front and paramilitary organization Church of the Creator, groups that have a long record of hatemongering, violence, and intimidation.

During the demonstration, some anti-racist protestors struck back against Gary Schipper and the Heritage Front. Paint bombs and rocks were thrown at his residence and windows were broken. Although these acts of vandalism were not planned by ARA, our group allows people to express their anger against fascism and white supremacy as they see fit. We do not police anti-racists.

VIOLENCE, ANGER, AND THE MEDIA

Since the demonstration, the media has made every effort to marginalize ARA. Echoing the Heritage Front, some reporters have described us as "anarchists, militant gays and lesbians, members of far left groups". In this way they delegitimize the anger that is building in this city against fascist groups and racist, anti-semitic and homophobic thugs in general.

We have been dismissed as unprincipled hooligans, when all the evidence shows that anti-racist protesters remained disciplined and focused during the demonstration, limiting property damage to Schipper's address. Furthermore, ARA supporters who went door-to-door explaining our presence met with strong support from the majority of area residents. While many were understandably nervous about a large militant demonstration passing through their neighbourhood, most were far more horrified to learn of nazi organizing in their backyards.

Some have accused ARA of "descending to the level of the fascists". We find it indecent, at best, to compare ARA's restrained protest to the cowardly and brutal violence committed by nazis recently:

- A five-on-one assault on a Black community activist in Toronto
- An arson attack on a residence for young women in Toronto
- An anti-semitic attack on a man in Kitchener
- Five people hospitalized by nazis rampaging through the streets of Ottawa after a Heritage Front recruitment rally
- A Tamil man grabbed and beaten in Toronto, by a nazi drunk and pumped-up after a Heritage Front rally earlier that evening

Where was the public outcry in response to these attacks? And the many others inspired by local fascists, if not carried out by them? Where was the media? But when a white man's windows are broken in an act of outrage against nazi terror, those young people responsible are branded as criminals.

WHAT ARE OTHER ANTI-RACIST ACTIVISTS SAYING ABOUT JUNE 11?

Media have diligently sought out anti-racist organizers and activists to publicly denounce ARA and the June 11 demonstration. So far, they have had little success. Even those who cannot endorse such action for political reasons have gone out of their way to avoid condemning us:

- Dudley Laws of the Black Action Defense Committee called the action "extreme... but justified".
- Bernie Farber of the Canadian Jewish Congress: "The problem is...the police and the attorney-general's office have not been co-operating. They have not used legislation as a means to stop to hate-mongering. Young people...understandably get very frustrated and wrongly take the law into their own hands. I really hold the people who are in the position of authority responsible at this point because they have chosen to do nothing [about hate crimes]."
- Martin Theriault of the Canadian Centre Against Racism and Prejudice: "Even though no one can support the vandalizing of a person's house, we also have to understand that given the amount of pressure and vicious attacks by the neo-nazis, and the lack of law enforcement response to neo-nazis in the past, that we did have all the conditions necessary for the incident at Schipper's house to occur."

DIFFERENT STRATEGIES -- ONE ANTI-RACIST MOVEMENT

We are learning from events in Europe and elsewhere that we need to use a variety of tactics in the fight against fascism. In Germany, the resurgence of the far-right has not been prevented even by laws against nazi organizing and propaganda much stronger than Canadian hate laws. Cops and the courts may sometimes slow down white supremacist activity, but we can't depend on them alone -- particularly when members of neo-nazi groups are employed by the military and police forces. European anti-fascists are also learning that millions may march in the streets against racist violence, but the murders and firebombings continue.

As a youth-oriented group, ARA is developing its own particular strategies to fight grassroots racism. We've focused on education in high schools, both to empower those who are targeted by fascists and to prevent fascist recruitment of young white students. We participate in anti-racist coalitions and help build mass demonstrations, and also organize militant and direct street action against local nazis.

Some anti-racist protestors were frightened at the June 11 demonstration. We sympathize! Because anti-fascist work is always dangerous, we prepare for possible attacks in any way we can, whether by developing defensive marshalling strategies, by carrying heavy picket signs to protect ourselves, or by keeping a march route secret. These tactics kept anti-racists safe on June 11, although close to 50 members of the Heritage Front and Church of the Creator were assembled a few blocks from our starting point.

We have to be clear with ourselves that it is fascist goons and racist police that make anti-fascist work dangerous -- **not** militant anti-racists! And the risks we take are worth it because we are seeing some results. While the Kitchener chapter of the Heritage Front holds meetings and displays propaganda in a downtown storefront, Toronto Front members can't even announce their events in advance for fear of anti-racist protest. Because they can't openly maintain an office space, their homes and offices have become their centres of operation. But after June 11, Droege and his partners in crime won't feel so secure hiding in their homes, organizing for the "final solution".

As a single group in a broad anti-racist movement, Anti-Racist Action supports **all** efforts and strategies to say NO TO NAZIS, whenever and wherever they appear. In light of current efforts to divide the anti-racist movement over a few broken windows, we ask for your continued support.

To contact ARA, please leave a message on our info-line at 363-7541.